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IMMIGRATION AND AMERICAN LABOR

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Most of us are opposed to all monopolies except our own. The officials of organized labor, being a part of us, can therefore hardly be blamed for being opposed to the encouragement of immigration. These officials feel exactly as merchants and professional men would feel if they were asked to help to increase the number of their competitors, and to that degree to invite decreased earnings.

The natural feeling on the part of organized labor officials is that a large influx of immigrants brings lowered wages and more hands to do the work, and thus less work for each pair of hands to do. When hard times come, they claim that these conditions simply aggravate the problem of unemployment.

The officials of organized labor are the leading proponents in the claim that immigration has largely been responsible for the existing state of industrial unrest; that it has been the largest single factor in preventing the wage scale from rising as rapidly as food prices; that it has done much to prevent the development of better relations between employers and employees; that it has greatly hampered the formation of trade unions and has increased the problem of securing responsible organizations.

I said that the officials of organized labor are opposed to immigration. No man knows what is the attitude on this question on the part of the rank and file of the three million trade unionists, since to my knowledge there has never been a trade union referendum taken to learn their attitude. It is quite likely that if such referendum were taken it would be found that the great body of trade unionists, many of whom are immigrants or the immediate descendants of immigrants, would favor giving the same opportunities for betterment to their European kith and kin that they have been permitted to enjoy.

What the worker in this country needs is the widest opportunity for employment and the greatest demand for the output of his handiwork.

Imagine the population of this nation reduced from one hundred million to say fifty million. It must be plain that under such circumstances the home consumption for the output of American labor would be cut in half and opportunities for employment on the part of the remaining 50 per cent of the population would be reduced accordingly.

On the other hand, imagine the population of the nation in due course doubled. This would double the home demand for labor's output. The increased output would lessen cost of production and thus tend to widen our world markets.

A great cry over the scarcity of labor comes from the farmer, more especially of the West. This very harvest season has seen a call for harvest hands at offers of wages almost prohibitory to the farmer, and yet the farm labor demand was not supplied. Let this condition go on and in the near future farming would become so unprofitable as to cut down the acreage under cultivation, not only because of the scarcity of new labor, but also because much of the present farm labor would be lured to the cities on account of the higher wages offered and the greater city attractions. This in turn would spell yet higher costs for food, putting a still greater burden on the consumer.

The European War has revolutionized world conditions. When it shall have been brought to an end, Europe will find herself poor indeed.

The world's greatest asset is its men. This most valuable of all assets is being steadily decimated by being killed off and crippled in Europe by the hundreds of thousands. When peace shall have been restored, the nations will find themselves handicapped not only by the loss of millions of able-bodied workers carried off by the bullet and by disease, but also by other millions of men who through loss of limb and of productive power will have become burdens.

There will be the greatest scarcity of able-bodied men to carry on the great work of restoring European industry and the ravages of war.

It is plain to foresee that the governments of Europe must establish conditions that will conserve for themselves what remains of their brawn and muscle. Every possible step will most likely be taken to put a ban upon emigration of the able-bodied, and

anyone who will encourage such emigration will be regarded as an enemy to the country and doubtless treated as such.

Meanwhile, while the warring countries of Europe are impoverishing themselves in men and in money, the United States is waxing rich as never before in its history. Its wealth will keep on growing to proportions never dreamed of by the wildest visionary. This vastly increased wealth must be profitably employed and can best be profitably employed by the development of our many yet undeveloped natural resources.

How are these great resources to be developed without an adequate labor supply? How are we to build our canals, our reservoirs and our railways? How are we to develop our mines, cut down our forests, build our ships, colonize our lands and conduct the potential great industrial enterprises now in sight, without added supply of brawn and muscle? Unless all this is done, the opportunities for still greater betterment on the part of the labor now with us are minimized.

We may deplore the fact, but the fact nevertheless remains, that our American-born workers look with more or less disdain upon the handling of the pick and shovel. Whatever the causes may be, they do not and will not perform the unavoidable tasks inseparable from the development of great natural resources by being "hewers of wood and drawers of water."

Imagine how impossible it would have been, for example, to build the Panama Canal within even a lifetime, if none but American citizens were to have been employed as common laborers. Had there not been available a supply of Jamaican negroes, Spanish, Mexican and other common labor, the completion of the Canal in all likelihood would have been postponed for a decade or more, to the loss of the entire world. As it was, remunerative employment for several years was afforded thousands of American citizens during the construction of the Canal as foremen, as engineers, and in all the positions of trust and responsibility.

Another problem affected by immigration is that of domestic service. Cut off the supply of house servants by restricting immigration and you further aggravate, more especially in the West, the great existing problem of securing domestic help. Already the cry of the American housewife has gone abroad that the supply is entirely inadequate to meet the demand. The lack of efficient

servants and the great increase in their wage have caused a famine in this line of activity. Again the fact remains that for social and other reasons American girls will not, as a rule, enter domestic service. The shorter hours, the alleged higher social standing, the greater freedom offered by the shop, the store and the office are decimating the ranks from which domestics were formerly recruited. This change in conditions is in the nature of a menace to the American home.

Untold thousands of salaried men and small tradesmen who could formerly afford to employ one or more domestic servants find that these have become luxuries beyond their means. The home is therefore in thousands of instances being abandoned all over the land for the boarding-house or the hotel. Children, formerly reared in private, surrounded by proper home influences, are now destined to be reared in cheap hotels or boarding-houses, with all their consequent ills on childhood. Conditions such as these must in time cause "our new graves to become more numerous than our cradles." The only recruiting ground for domestic help remains in Europe.

Minimize immigration and you still further aggravate the existing problem of domestic service.

There is today throughout industrial centers a labor famine, caused partly by the cessation of immigration and partly due to many able-bodied men of foreign birth leaving the United States to fight the battles of their native land. This labor famine is limiting the possibilities of industrial and agricultural development and is simply a forecast of what would follow a still further limitation of immigration. The unprecedented industrial and agricultural expansion which has taken place in this country in recent decades is primarily due to immigration. Without it, development along such lines would long since have ceased.

The possibilities in all directions in this country are as yet limitless. We can better appreciate this when we realize that the State of Texas with England's density of population could alone accommodate the people of the entire United States.

Every able-bodied male or female producer, literate or illiterate, that can be brought to this country with sound body and good character is an added asset.

It has been pointed out that a first class black slave was worth

before the Civil War, \$1,500. How much more then should a healthy, able-bodied, free, white man be worth to the country?

It is true that at times our congested centers are seemingly overloaded with labor. A goodly percentage of this overload will be found to be among seasonal workers, temporarily out of employment because of climatic conditions, as well as the disabled, the incompetent, the unwilling, or the victims of drink, drugs or disease.

These conditions could in a measure be minimized if we were to follow the plan pursued by the Argentine Republic and other South American countries, which furnish free transportation within their borders to new arrivals in order to minimize labor congestion.

It is not a question so much of giving population across the sea so large a place in our regard and in our hospitality, as it is a question of seeking the welfare and development of our own nation, and all its wonderful resources.

We are told that immigration tends to beat down wages; but the fact remains that wages have advanced more rapidly and hours of labor have been shortened more during the periods of our greatest European immigration than in any previous period in our industrial history.

It has been pointed out that

eighty-five per cent of all labor in the slaughtering and packing industries is done by alien laborers. They mine seven-tenths of our bituminous coal. They do 78 per cent of the work in the woolen mills, nine-tenths of all the labor in the cotton mills, and make nineteen-twentieths of all the clothing. Immigrants make more than half the shoes in the country. They turn out four-fifths of our furniture, half the tobacco and cigars and nearly all of our sugar. In the iron and steel industries, immigrants share all the risks.

The workman at one time looked upon the invention of every labor-saving device as a menace and a competitor likely to rob him of his job. Time has shown that, instead of robbing men of labor, these devices have created untold new avenues of labor. The lessened cost of production made possible by labor-saving devices has greatly increased consumption and thus in turn tremendously increased the demand for labor.

The immigrant, by furnishing the needed labor, opens out new productive possibilities that otherwise would remain closed, so that instead of robbing those here of work, his presence makes new and still more abundant work possible.

Despite the alleged excessive immigration of recent decades, the fact remains that the ratio between foreign- and native-born during the past fifty years remains substantially the same. The census shows that in 1860 the foreign-born were 13.2 per cent of the population, and in 1910 were but 14.7 per cent. Wages are higher, working hours shorter, and standards of living far in advance in the United States today compared with 1860.

It has been pointed out that immigrants have a passion for educating their children. The United States Commissioner of Education tells us in a Bulletin that

the least illiterate element of our children is the native-born children of foreign-born parents. The illiteracy among the children of native-born parents is three times as great as that among the native-born children of foreign-born parents.

We find then that labor leaders and those who sympathize with their point of view are not warranted by the facts in opposing immigration. We find that our industrial needs, our agricultural needs, our domestic needs, all demand that we shall continue to extend the hand of welcome to every decent, able-bodied man and woman who is willing to come and work among us. We find that the greatest progress we have made in trade, in industry, in commerce, in agriculture, in education, in the arts and sciences and in social welfare has been made during the decades when immigration in this country has been greatest. We believe that ample provision has been made by law to keep out the mentally, morally, and physically unfit. We believe that these laws should be rigidly enforced and that if the present machinery for doing so is inadequate it should be bettered and perfected. We believe that in order to make still greater progress along all lines of human endeavor, we can with perfect safety and advantage to ourselves and to our children, as well as to the advantage of the fit immigrants and their children, invite them to be of us and with us for their good and for ours.